

Irrigation

*In the **Vilcanota valley** in Peru, where Practical Action's food production programme works with small scale farmers, irrigation has been a key to improving livelihoods.*

Over 100 civil works projects have been carried out in tens of farming communities, which has benefited several thousand farming families. These have included building and lining of reservoirs, building of lined irrigation canals, minor civil engineering works and installation of sprinkler and gravity-fed irrigation systems.

Additionally a tree planting programme has been undertaken on the slopes for soil and water conservation.

Irrigation in Peru

High in the Andes it only rains for a few months of each year. In the dry season the fields are parched and the only water source is often far away across rocky, dangerous terrain. Without water, crops wouldn't grow and there is no grass for the cows. Families must rely on stored food, lacking vitamins and minerals.

Ever since the Incas, people in Peru have used irrigation to improve their land and grow more crops - but the skills needed to build watering systems have gone unused for centuries.

Practical Action works with the whole community to devise an irrigation system that meets their needs. Practically all the labour will be provided by the community themselves, using basic tools such as wooden A-frames and simple hoes. The people dig long, concrete-lined channels, sometimes miles long, to draw water from the mountain river to a network of smaller pipes that go to an individual's fields. In each field, sprinkler pipes will spray the water over the crops as needed. Many of the channels follow ancient waterways originally created by the Incas.

In Sicuani, a basic irrigation system is yielding results. Previously cows would only give three litres of milk per hectare per day - and this only during the wet season. Now, using simple sprinkler pipes, people can grow pasture, and their cows produce more milk - five and a half litres per hectare every day, all year round. Families have enough to drink, and extra to sell or make into cheese, and many household incomes have doubled.



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Last updated: January 18, 2006 |

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